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To the Co-Chairs and members of the Energy and Technology Committee

Testimony regarding House Bill 6360 An Act Concerning Implementation of Connecticut's Comprehensive Energy Strategy

Submitted by Elise J. Willer, Legislative Policy Organizer

Senator Duff, Representative Reed, and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on House Bill 6360, An Act Concerning Implementation of Connecticut's Comprehensive Energy Strategy.

I am testifying today in two different capacities. One on behalf of CT Working Families, an organization dedicated to the economic livelihoods of middle and working class families in Connecticut. Secondly, as a fellow human affected by climate change and concerned about the reality that we have but one earth to share. Sometimes it can be difficult to see how, in the short term, these two interests can work in tandem but that is not the case in Connecticut. In Connecticut we have already identified energy efficiency as a significant part of our energy future.

The Comprehensive Energy Strategy did a commendable job demonstrating that increased energy efficiency is one of the best ways to bring down energy bills, create jobs, and help reduce Connecticut's carbon footprint. It did such a good job that Working Families is suggesting even stronger policies to invigorate our existing programs and expand them to reach every corner of the state.

The establishment of the Energy Efficiency Fund has resulted in many programs that are already helping Connecticut homeowners and businesses reduce their energy costs by providing subsidies for energy audits, furnaces, boilers and other energy saving projects. However, the only contributors to this fund and subsequently the only people with access to the energy savings (past June 2013) are natural gas and electric ratepayers. With around 50% of the state heating their home with oil, we need heating oil customers to pay their fair share. As such, Connecticut Working Families supports the establishment of a stable funding source for heating oil energy.

Much of the Comprehensive Energy Strategy is focused on a large natural gas build-out potentially resulting in 300,000 homes converting to natural gas as their main energy



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source. It seems logical to Working Families that if the reasons for such a large natural gas build-out are jobs, reduced energy bills and saving the environment; that energy efficiency measures that accomplish the same goals potentially even beyond the life of natural gas should then accompany any natural gas expansion. As such, Working Families supports integrating energy efficiency into all natural gas conversions.

While analyzing Connecticut's residential energy efficiency programs, it became apparent that reaching our goal of 80% weatherization might not be possible without increased participation and a real commitment to achieving deeper energy savings. We believe that the key to overcoming these obstacles is supporting community organizations and members in energy efficiency grassroots outreach. Working Families supports the development of a statewide community based approach to increase home and business retrofits while also addressing issues in under-served communities.

Finally, as we think about Connecticut's energy future, it is critical that we think about the jobs that we are creating. An increased energy efficiency fund, a major natural gas expansion, and greater demand for energy efficiency measures will naturally result in hundreds of new jobs. But instead of leaving it at that- the creation of jobs- I encourage Connecticut to take one more step and not just create jobs, but create careers, create a new green economy where people are paid living wages and are benefitted accordingly. Working Families supports adding wage and benefit standards to any Request For Proposals resulting from legislation associated with the Comprehensive Energy Strategy.

The foremost idea of this testimony is Energy Efficiency. By doubling our energy efficiency fund, combining energy efficiency and natural gas conversions, supporting energy efficiency community outreach, and encouraging fair labor practices for energy efficiency Connecticut will be on track for a job creating, cleaner, healthier, and more reliable energy future.

Thank you.